

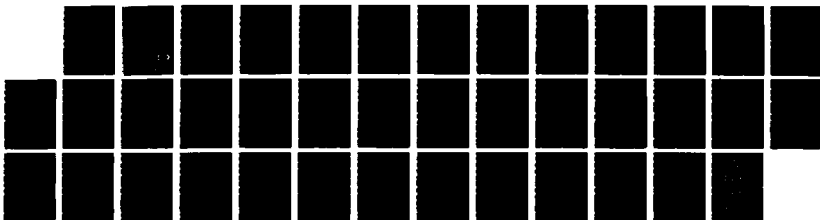
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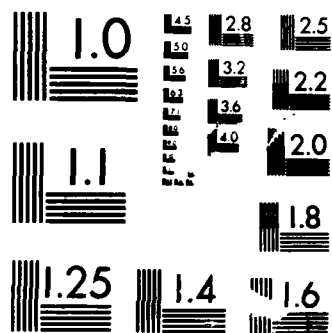
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Using and Evaluating Differential Modeling in Intelligent Tutoring and Apprentice Learning Systems

by

D. C. Wilkins, W. J. Clancey, and B. G. Buchanan

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Department of Computer Science

Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

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David C. Wilkins, William J. Clancey and Bruce G. Buchanan

Knowledge Systems Laboratory
Department of Computer Science
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

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Abstract

A powerful approach to debugging and refining the knowledge structures of a problem-solving agent is to differentially model the actions of the agent against a gold standard. This paper proposes a framework for exploring the inherent limitations of such an approach when a problem solver is differentially modeled against an expert system. A procedure is described for determining a *performance upper bound* for debugging via differential modeling, called the *synthetic agent method*. The synthetic agent method systematically explores the space of near miss training instances and expresses the limits of debugging in terms of the knowledge representation and control language constructs of the expert system.

1 Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has long been interested in methods to automatically refine and debug an intelligent agent. This is a central concern in machine learning and automatic programming, where the agent to be improved is a program. It is also a central concern in intelligent tutoring, where the agent to be improved is a human problem solver. Many AI systems for improving an intelligent agent involve

differential modeling of the agent against the observable problem-solving behavior of another agent. We focus on the situation where one of the agents is a knowledge-based expert system and the knowledge structures to be improved encode factual information that is declaratively represented¹.

This paper describes the synthetic agent method, which allows calculation of a *performance upper bound* on improvement to an intelligent agent attainable by differential modeling of the agent against an expert system. A performance upper bound identifies missing or erroneous knowledge in an intelligent agent that a particular differential modeling system is inherently incapable of identifying. By contrast, most performance evaluation procedures aim to determine a performance lower bound; they experimentally demonstrate that a particular differential modeling system can successfully identify some missing or erroneous knowledge.

The *synthetic agent method* involves replacing the human problem solver in a differential modeling scenario with a synthetic agent that is another expert system. The knowledge in the synthetic agent expert system is systematically modified to be slightly different than the knowledge in the original expert system. The knowledge in the synthetic agent is modified to be slightly 'better' in an apprenticeship learning scenario and slightly 'worse' in an intelligent tutoring scenario.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 surveys previous and current work on improving an intelligent agent via differential modeling. Section 3 identifies important performance evaluation issues related to evaluation of a differential modeler. Section 4 presents and discusses the synthetic agent method. Finally, Section 5 describes an application of the synthetic agent method that is currently underway.

This paper presents our framework for evaluating a differential modeling system. No experimental results are given. A future paper will describe the use of the framework to evaluate the ODYSSEUS modeling program (described in Section 5) in the context of intelligent tutoring and apprenticeship learning.

¹As much domain-specific knowledge as possible is declaratively represented in a well designed knowledge-intensive expert system. Domain-specific procedural knowledge is contained in an expert system shell for the generic problem class (Clancey, 1984).

2 The Process of Differential Modeling

Many AI systems that debug and refine an intelligent agent employ a method called *differential modeling*; this is the process of identifying differences between the observed behavior of a problem-solving agent and the behavior that would be expected in accordance with an *explicit model* of problem solving.

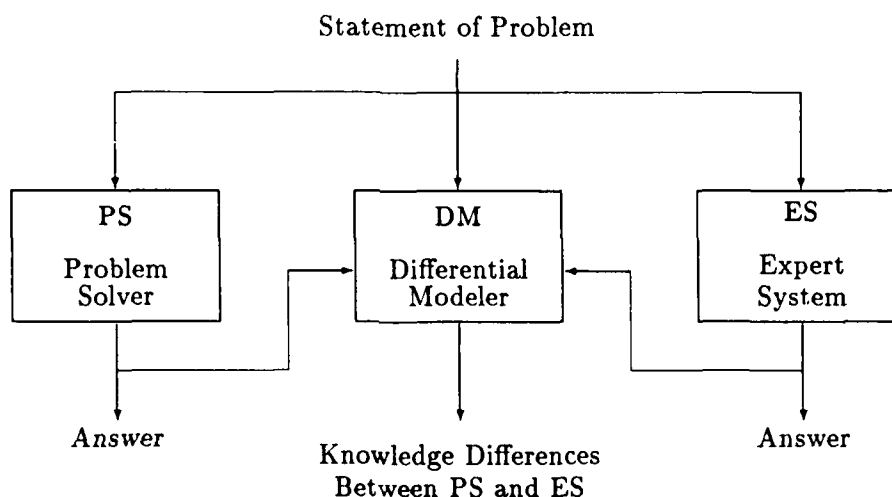


Figure 1: A general model of the differential modeling process. PS solves a problem, and DM finds differences between knowledge structures of PS and ES. In this paper, equal attention is given to the situation of apprenticeship learning where PS is a human expert and the goal is to improve ES; and the situation of intelligent tutoring where PS is a student and the goal is to improve PS.

The differential modeling process is illustrated in Figure 1. The three major elements are a problem solver (PS), a differential modeler (DM), and a knowledge-based expert system (ES). The task of the DM is to identify differences between the knowledge structures of PS and ES in the course of watching PS solve a problem, for example a medical diagnosis problem. In the figure, *Answer* consists of all observable behavior of the respective problem solver. The DM can be quite complex and can easily exceed the complexity of the ES.

Two major tasks that confront a DM are global and local credit assignment, which are performed by a global and local learning critic, respectively. The global critic determines when the observable behavior of PS suggests a difference between the knowledge structures of ES and PS. In such a situation, the local critic is summoned to identify possible knowledge differences between ES and PS that are suggested by the actions of PS. A complete learning system consists of a global critic, local critic and a repair component (Dietterich and Buchanan, 1981); discussion of the repair stage is beyond the scope of this paper.

2.1 Previous work in differential modeling

AI systems that employ a differential modeling approach to debugging and refining a problem-solving agent are found in the areas of machine learning, automatic programming, and intelligent tutoring. We first describe systems that do not employ a knowledge-based expert system as the explicit model of problem solving and then describe systems that do.

The earliest such systems were in the area of machine learning, notably, Samuel's checker player and Waterman's poker player (Samuel, 1963; Waterman, 1970). The PS used by Samuel's DM program was a book of championship checker games. The DM global critic task was accomplished by comparing the move of PS to the move that Samuel's program made in the same situation. The local critic task was accomplished by adjusting the coefficients of a polynomial evaluation function for selecting moves so that the action of the program equaled the action of PS. A recent example of machine learning research that uses a differential modeling approach is the PRE system for theory-directed data interpretation (Dietterich, 1984). PRE learns programs for Unix commands from examples of the use of the commands. The DM employs constraint propagation to identify differences between the PS and the programs for commands.

In automatic programming, the synthesis of LISP and PROLOG functions from example traces falls under the rubric of debugging via differential modeling (Biermann, 1978; Shapiro, 1983). The PS consists of the input/output behavior of a

correct program. The DM modifies the program being synthesized whenever it does not give the same output as PS when given the same input.

In intelligent tutoring the goal is to 'debug' a human problem solver. Many intelligent tutoring systems contain an expert system and use a differential modeling technique, including the WEST program in the domain of games (Burton and Brown, 1982), SOPHIE III and GUIDON in the domain of diagnosis (Brown et al., 1982; Clancey, 1979), and the MACSYMA-ADVISOR in the domain of symbolic integration (Genesereth, 1982). SOPHIE III uses an expert system for circuit diagnosis as an aid in isolating hypothesis errors in the behavior of students who are performing electronic troubleshooting. GUIDON is built over the MYCIN expert system for medical diagnosis (Buchanan and Shortliffe, 1984); student hypothesis errors are discovered in the process of conducting a Socratic dialogue.

Recent research within machine learning also uses an expert system as the explicit model of problem solving, especially within the subarea of *apprenticeship learning*. Apprenticeship learning is defined as a form of learning that occurs in the context of normal problem solving and uses *underlying theories* of the problem solving domain to accomplish learning. Examples of apprenticeship learning systems are LEAP and ODYSSEUS. The LEAP program refines knowledge bases for the VEXED expert system for VLSI circuit design (Mitchell et al., 1985). PS is a circuit designer who is using the VEXED circuit design aid and the underlying theory used by the DM is circuit theory. ODYSSEUS refines and debugs knowledge bases for the HERACLES expert system shell, which solves problems using the heuristic classification method (Wilkins, 1986). When the ODYSSEUS problem domain is medical diagnosis, PS is a physician diagnosing a patient. The DM uses two underlying theories, the principal one being a strategy theory of the problem-solving method. ODYSSEUS is also applicable to intelligent tutoring; it functions as a student modeling program for the GUIDON2 intelligent tutoring system (Clancey, 1986a).

2.2 Assumptions and issues in differential modeling

Much of the power of an expert system derives from the quantity and quality of its domain-specific knowledge. For the purposes of this paper, the principal function of the differential modeler is to find factual domain knowledge differences between the problem solver and the expert system. Our work assumes that the expert system represents domain knowledge declaratively, including domain-specific control knowledge. Further, as much as possible, the knowledge is represented independently of how it will be used by problem-solving programs. This practice facilitates use of the same domain knowledge for different purposes, such as problem solving, explanation, tutoring and learning.

The framework provided by this paper for understanding the limits of debugging via differential modeling has been fashioned with the following assumptions in mind. First, we assume that an agent is differentially modeled against a knowledge-based expert system that is capable of solving the problems presented to the human PS. Second, we assume that the observed actions of the agent consist of normal problem-solving behavior in a domain. And third, we assume that the goal of the differential modeling system is to discover factual domain knowledge differences between the agent and the expert system's knowledge base, as opposed to the discovery of procedural control knowledge differences; procedural knowledge involves sequencing constructs such as looping and recursion.

There are many open questions regarding debugging via differential modeling against an expert system. For instance, what are the types of knowledge in the PS that can and cannot be debugged using a differential modeling approach? What characteristics and organization of an ES facilitate differential modeling? What characteristics and organization impose inherent limitations? How can the strengths and weaknesses of a particular DM be best described? The evaluation methodology proposed in this paper, called the synthetic agent method, provides a framework for the exploration of these questions.

3 Performance Evaluation Issues

DM performance evaluation is intimately related to ES performance evaluation. The function of a DM is to improve the performance of an ES and so DM performance evaluation requires ES performance evaluation. Although ES evaluation is a difficult and time consuming task, there is agreement on the general approach that should be taken when ES is an expert system program. Examples of performance evaluation studies based on a sound methodology are the evaluations of the MYCIN, INTERNIST and RL expert systems (Yu et al., 1979; Miller et al., 1984; Fu and Buchanan, 1985).

Two major functions of a DM are global and local credit assignment². The general problem of assessing the limits of a DM consists of finding performance upper bounds on a DM's global and local critics. The difficulty of these functions is very domain dependent. In the domain used to develop repair theory, the global critic merely has to determine whether a student's answer to a subtraction problem is correct (Brown and VanLehn, 1980). Sometimes a DM has a person perform the global credit assignment, for example in LEAP and MACSYMA-ADVISOR. In very difficult domains a DM might have a person perform both global and local credit assignment; TEIRESIAS takes this approach when debugging MYCIN (Davis, 1982). TEIRESIAS can be viewed as an intelligent editor that allows an expert to perform global and local credit assignment while watching MYCIN solve problems.

In domains where expertise involves heuristic problem solving, having a program perform global credit assignment is often very difficult. In a medical apprenticeship, a student may recognize that his or her knowledge is deficient when he or she can no longer make sense of the sequence of questions that the physician asks the patient. Since a weakly plausible explanation for any sequence of questions often exists, this can be very difficult to implement in a computer program. A similar situation exists in complex games such as chess or checkers. There is usually no way to know that a given move is necessarily bad; it depends on what follows. Samuel's checker player solved the global critic problem by declaring a discrepancy to exist

²Recall from section 2 that the global critic notices that something is wrong and the local critic determines which part of the knowledge base is responsible for the error. A learning program consists of a global and local critic and a repair component.

whenever the expert (e.g., the book move) and the checker program recommended different moves at a particular board configuration.

There are often many different changes the local critic can make to effect an improvement in the performance element. The selection process is usually based on which modification leads to the best improvement in the performance element. Selection is very much affected by how 'improvement' is defined. This is further discussed in Section 3.2.

3.1 Performance evaluation and the synthetic agent method

The synthetic agent method proposed in this paper is considerably different from standard performance evaluation methods in two fundamental ways. The purpose of the remainder of Section 3 is to explain and justify these aspects of the synthetic agent method. In Section 3.2 we argue that a fruitful evaluation criteria for a knowledge-based system should be quality of the individual knowledge elements, not the quality of the problem solving performance of a particular problem-solving program. These metrics only partially overlap and certainly conflict in the short term. In section 3.3, we describe how the focus of the proposed synthetic agent method is to delineate a *performance upper bound*. A performance upper bound describes where and under what conditions a debugging system for a problem solver must fail. By contrast, a standard evaluation approach aims at showing the extent to which a debugging system can succeed. Further, instead of characterizing the limits of debugging in terms of a percentage of problems that cannot be solved, the synthetic agent method characterizes the performance upper bound in terms of the knowledge representation language and the inference constructs used in the expert system.

3.2 Knowledge-oriented vs. performance-oriented validation

The ultimate goal of a DM is to improve the performance of a PS or ES. The architecture of knowledge-based systems requires a shift in our concept of improved performance. We refer to the type of validation technique we advocate as *knowledge-oriented* validation and distinguish it from the traditional practice of *performance-oriented* validation.

Performance-oriented validation requires that modifications to a particular problem-solving program improve problem-solving performance. Because this type of validation has traditionally focused on improved performance with respect to a single problem-solving program, the veracity of the underlying knowledge has not been of overriding concern. A system designed exclusively to maximize problem-solving performance of a particular problem-solving program may use a method of knowledge representation in which the semantics of the domain knowledge cannot be represented easily, if at all. A polynomial evaluation function for rating checker positions, for example, captures none of the meaning of its terms.

Knowledge-oriented validation might be defined as performance-oriented validation that prohibits lessening the truth of individual knowledge elements solely for the sake of problem-solving performance. The advent of large declarative knowledge bases used by multiple problem solving programs makes this perspective important. Examples of multiple problem-solving programs that might use the same medical knowledge base are programs to accomplish medical diagnosis, knowledge acquisition, intelligent tutoring, and explanation. When multiple programs use the same declaratively-specified factual knowledge base, it is helpful to specify knowledge in a manner that is independent, so far as possible, of its use. Knowledge-based validation accomplishes this by requiring that changes to the knowledge base be semantically meaningful.

Suppose we wish to be faithful to the traditional performance-oriented validation paradigm when using multiple-purpose knowledge bases. This requires that every time a learning program finds a change to the knowledge base that will improve

one problem-solving program, before that change can be recorded, the validation method must insure that the aggregate performance of all programs is improved. This policy will be expensive and computationally overwhelming. Further, programs for all the intended uses of a knowledge base are not necessarily in existence at the time learning is taking place.

Another rationale for knowledge-oriented validation is our belief that performance in the long term will be more correct and robust if the knowledge structures are carefully developed. Moreover, when PS is a person, it is unrealistic, probably even unwise, to attempt to replace semantically-rich knowledge structures with others that deviate radically from them merely to improve short-term performance.

It should be noted that to some extent all programs for improving an intelligent agent aim at both good performance and good knowledge; nevertheless, almost all past research in machine learning, intelligent tutoring and automatic programming has adopted a pure performance-oriented validation approach. This is especially true in automatic programming, where any mutation to the program to be debugged is judged to be acceptable if it causes the program to produce the correct output when given a correct input/output training instance (Shapiro, 1983).

In machine learning, one of the best systems for refining an expert system knowledge base is the SEEK2 program for the EXPERT expert system shell (Ginsberg et al., 1985). This learning system takes a performance-oriented validation approach. One possible input to SEEK2 is a *representative set* of past solved cases and an initial knowledge base of rules. Given this input, SEEK2 attempts to modify elements of the knowledge base so as to maximize the problem-solving performance of the EXPERT expert system on the given representative set of solved problem cases. In EXPERT, the strengths of inexact rules in the knowledge base are represented using certainty factors (CFs). Examples of modification operators used by SEEK2 to improve performance are LOWER-CF and RAISE-CF (Ginsberg, 1986). When a representative set of past cases is present, the strengths of inexact rules are determined, since certainty factors can be given a strict probabilistic interpretation (Heckerman, 1986). We strongly believe that an arbitrary change to the strength of a rule just to improve performance is unjustifiable and unnecessary (Wilkins and Buchanan,

1986). The cost of this improved performance is a knowledge base that may contain incorrect knowledge. The SEEK2 refinement approach is not an instance of knowledge-oriented learning; it does not use knowledge-oriented validation.

A good example of knowledge-oriented learning is repair theory in the domain of subtraction problems (Brown and VanLehn, 1980). Repair theory is concerned with detecting underlying bugs, given the observable problem solving behavior of students. Repair theory has a procedural model of problem solving that claims to be a plausible model of the associated human skill; bugs of students are correlated with possible bugs in the problem-solving procedure for subtraction. Repair theory is similar in spirit to the synthetic agent method we propose for assessing a differential modeling system. Repair theory generates most of the significant possible bugs by deleting parts of the procedural knowledge; likewise we expect our approach to generate most of the significant possible types of bugs in the declarative domain knowledge base, mainly by deleting parts of the knowledge base, as we shall describe in Section 4. The main difference is that in the repair theory model of subtraction the PS and ES knowledge is almost completely procedural, whereas we are interested in factual knowledge is declaratively represented.

3.3 Capability-oriented vs. limitation-oriented validation

A typical way of validating that a DM improves an ES involves using a disjoint set of validation and training problem sets. The ES solves the *validation* problem set and its performance is recorded. Then the DM improves the ES while watching a human expert PS solve a *training* problem set. Finally ES solves the validation problems again; the amount of improvement in performance provides a measure of the quality of the DM.

This scenario establishes a lower bound on the quality of a DM. By increasing the size of the training problem set, DM might improve ES even more. We refer to validation methods that establish a lower bound on the quality of a DM as *capability-oriented*. For a given set of training and validation problems, capability-oriented validation shows that the DM is responsible for a more capable ES.

Another method of validating a DM is to have the DM watch a student solve a training problem set. Let us assume that the student exhibits a representative set of the types of domain knowledge errors that could be made in the problem domain. A domain expert can manually identify the domain knowledge errors connected with each training problem. This manual analysis provides a performance upper bound with respect to this training set for the DM, and the DM modeling program is measured against this standard. The goals of this type of manual analysis and our proposed automated analysis using the synthetic agent method are identical, in the case where the student and the problem set have been both constructed so as to allow all possible types of domain knowledge errors to be made.

We desire to know those types of differences in an expert system knowledge base that cannot be detected or corrected via differential modeling. In contrast to the capability-oriented approach, our validation approach aims at determining when the differential modeler must fail — we are *limitation-oriented*. For example, a limit of a program for inducing LISP functions from examples might be that the program can't induce cases that require certain types of loop constructs. In our work, we have focused on showing certain conditions that force the differential modeling approach to fail under the most favorable of conditions, the single fault assumption. The multiple fault assumption would allow determination of a broader performance upper bound.

4 Synthetic Agent Method of Validation

The apprenticeship learning and tutoring scenarios shown in Figures 2 and 3 involve two agents: a person and an expert system. The person serves as an expert and student, in the context of apprenticeship learning and intelligent tutoring, respectively. The *synthetic agent method* consists of replacing the person with a synthetic agent, which is another expert system, in order to experiment with and validate the differential modeling system objectively. The knowledge in the synthetic agent expert system is modified to be slightly different from the knowledge in the original expert system. The knowledge is modified to be slightly 'better' in an apprenticeship

learning scenario and slightly 'worse' in an intelligent tutoring scenario.

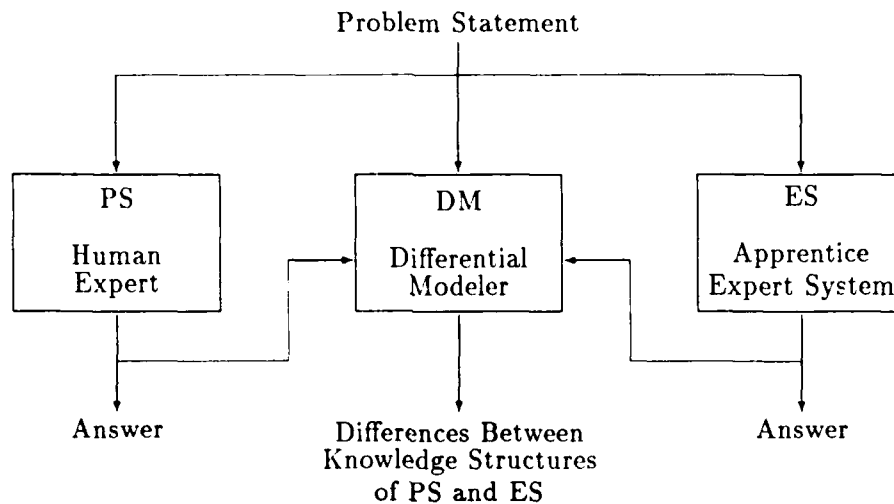


Figure 3: Apprentice learning scenario: Apprentice expert system watches human expert through the differential modeling program, with the goal of improving the apprentice program's knowledge.

An advantage of the synthetic agent method is control over interpersonal variables involved in differential modeling. An example of an interpersonal variable is the problem-solving style of a PS, as exemplified by the set of strategic diagnostic operators used by the PS. Diagnostic operators specify the permissible task procedures that can be applied to a problem as well as the allowable methods for achieving the task procedures. Examples of problem-solving operators in the domain of diagnosis include: ask general questions, ask clarifying questions, refine hypotheses, differentiate between hypotheses, and test hypothesis. Another interpersonal variable is the quantity of domain-specific knowledge that the PS possesses.

While control of interpersonal variables almost always leads to an incorrect DM performance lower bound, conclusions reached concerning a performance upper bound are sound when interpersonal variables are controlled. If a system is inherently limited under the most optimal assumptions possible for differential modeling, it will still be inherently limited in those settings that involve a less optimal differential modeling setting.

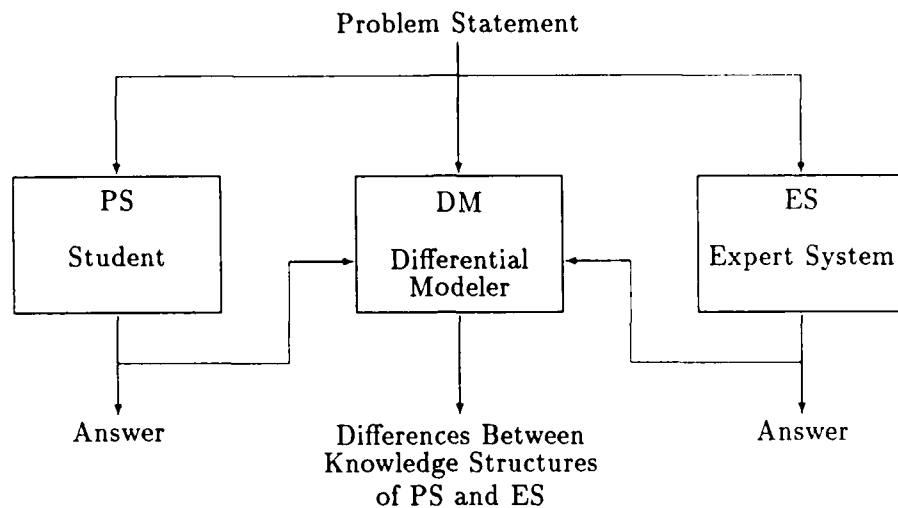


Figure 4: Intelligent tutoring scenario: Expert system watches student through the differential modeling program, with the goal of improving the student's knowledge.

In the learning and tutoring scenarios, the synthetic agent method treats the original expert system knowledge base as a "gold standard". The apprentice ES and the student PS always have a deficiency with respect to this gold standard. In this paper we restrict our analysis to the situation where the apprentice's knowledge differs from the gold standard by a single element of knowledge; hence we have a single fault assumption. Two types of knowledge base discrepancies are possible: missing knowledge and erroneous knowledge. The synthetic agent method procedure described in section 4.1 shows how deletion of knowledge can represent the space of missing and erroneous knowledge. Other methods for creating erroneous knowledge are described in section 4.3.

For a given problem statement, a distinction is made between referenced, observable, and essential knowledge in the ES's knowledge base. The relation between these categories is illustrated in Figure 4. *Referenced* knowledge is simply knowledge that is accessed during a problem solving case. *Observable knowledge* is knowledge whose removal leads to different external observable behavior of a PS, either in the sequence of actions that the PS exhibits or the final answer. *Essential knowledge* is

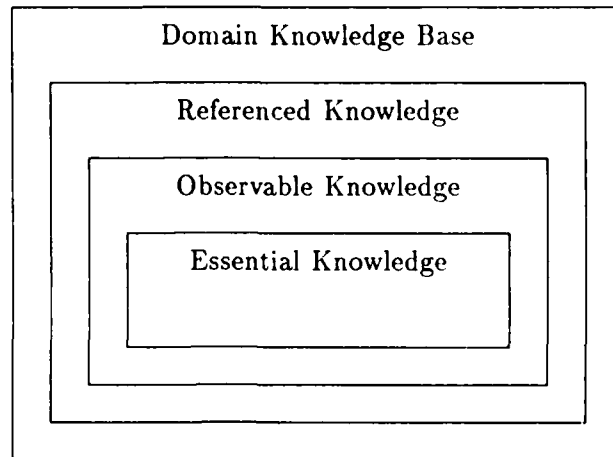


Figure 5: The relation between different categories of knowledge, with respect to a particular problem case.

knowledge whose removal leads to a significantly different final answer.

Of most concern is the apprentice's ability to acquire the *essential knowledge elements* connected with a problem statement. These are the relations most important for solving a given case. For plausible reasoning systems, what comprises a significantly different answer needs to be specified. For instance, if there are multiple diagnoses, the significance of the order in which the hypotheses are ranked needs to be determined. Acquisition of elements that are observable but not essential are also of interest, since they can be essential elements with respect to another problem statement.

The procedure for calculating a performance upper bound on a differential modeling system is now presented.

4.1 The synthetic agent method

Step 1. Create synthetic agent. Replace PS with a synthetic agent: a copy of ES with initially the same domain knowledge.

Step 2. Solve problem case. Solve a problem using PS and save the *solution trace*, i.e., the observable actions of PS and the final answer.

Step 3. Identify observable knowledge. For a particular problem case, collect all elements in the knowledge base that were referenced by PS during problem solving. Identify the *observable* knowledge: the subset of the referenced knowledge whose removal would lead to a different solution trace or a different final answer.

Step 4. For each observable knowledge element:

Step 4a. Remove the element from ES. In an apprenticeship learning scenario this creates an apprentice expert ES with *missing knowledge*. In an intelligent tutoring scenario the element removed from the ES is declared to be erroneous³. Since the element is still present in PS, the synthetic student PS has *erroneous knowledge*.

Step 4b. Detect and localize knowledge discrepancy. Have the PS solve the problem case. See if DM can detect (the global critic problem) and localize (the local critic problem) the knowledge difference.

Step 5. For each observable knowledge element:

Step 5a. Remove the element from PS. In an intelligent tutoring scenario this creates a synthetic student PS with *missing knowledge*. In an apprenticeship learning scenario the element removed from the PS is declared to be erroneous³. Since the element is still present in ES, the apprentice expert ES has *erroneous knowledge*.

Step 5b. Detect and localize knowledge discrepancy. Have the PS solve the problem case. See if DM can detect (the global critic problem) and localize (the local critic problem) the knowledge difference.

³N.B. This element of knowledge is treated as erroneous for purposes of validation. In reality, the element is true knowledge.

4.2 Discussion of synthetic agent method

An expert system's explanation facility can be helpful in locating the observable knowledge with respect to a given problem case. One of the hallmarks of a good expert system is its ability to explain its own reasoning. So it is not too much to ask for those pieces of knowledge used on a problem case, and a good explanation system might even be able to identify the essential knowledge. At worst, given the pieces of knowledge that were used to solve a particular problem, the essential pieces of knowledge can be determined by experimentation. Usually, only a small amount of an expert system's domain knowledge is observable with respect to a given problem, and our experiences in the medical diagnosis domain have shown us that only a small amount of the observable knowledge is essential knowledge.

Some knowledge that is referenced by the expert system may not have observable consequences, even if it is used by the problem solver, since the removal of knowledge does not always effect the external behavior of a problem solver. For instance, in MYCIN and NEOMYCIN, terms that represent medical symptoms and measurements, such as patient weight, have an ASKFIRST property. The expert system uses the value of this property to decide whether the value of a variable is first determined by asking the user or first determined by derivation by some other method, such as from first principles. However, if the system does not possess techniques for deriving the information from other principles, then the external behavior of the system is the same regardless of the value of the ASKFIRST property.

When testing the global critic in steps 4b and 5b of the synthetic agent method, part of the assessment must relate to whether the apprentice detects knowledge base differences close to the point in the problem-solving session where the different knowledge was used. This temporal proximity is important, since the problem-solving context at this point in the problem-solving session strongly focuses the search for missing or erroneous knowledge.

4.3 Categories of errors

The knowledge organization that we focus upon specifies all factual domain knowledge in a declarative fashion. In such a knowledge base, there are two main categories of errors: missing and erroneous knowledge. Missing knowledge is absent from the knowledge base, and erroneous knowledge is factually incorrect knowledge that is present in the knowledge base.

The space of missing knowledge is easy to generate, especially with the single fault assumption. Recall that the original expert system serves as our gold standard and the domain knowledge in the expert system is declaratively represented. Hence, the number of single faults from missing knowledge is equal to the number of elements in the declarative knowledge base.

The space of erroneous knowledge is much more difficult to describe. The synthetic agent method takes a novel approach to the problem in steps 5a and 6a. An erroneous element is created by declaring a correct knowledge element to be erroneous for purposes of validation. We are also considering other approaches. Much of the knowledge is represented declaratively and typed. Therefore, erroneous knowledge can be generated by substituting different values for the knowledge in the range of the type, as long as the assumption can be made that the erroneous knowledge is at least correctly typed by the problem solver. The space of possible variations of declarative associational rule knowledge is significantly reduced by the practice used in the HERACLES' expert system shell of factoring different types of knowledge from the domain knowledge, such as causal, definitional, and control knowledge (Clancey, 1986b).

5 Application of Synthetic Expert Method

Our investigations of a performance upper bound for a differential modeler are being performed in the context of the HERACLES and ODYSSEUS systems. HERACLES is an expert system shell that solves classification-type problems using the heuris-

tic classification method (Clancey, 1985). The ODYSSEUS program differentially models a PS against any ES implemented using the HERACLES expert system shell (Wilkins, 1986). When PS is a human expert, ODYSSEUS functions as a knowledge acquisition program for the HERACLES expert system shell. When PS is a student, ODYSSEUS functions as a student modeling program for the GUIDON2 intelligent tutoring system, which is built over HERACLES.

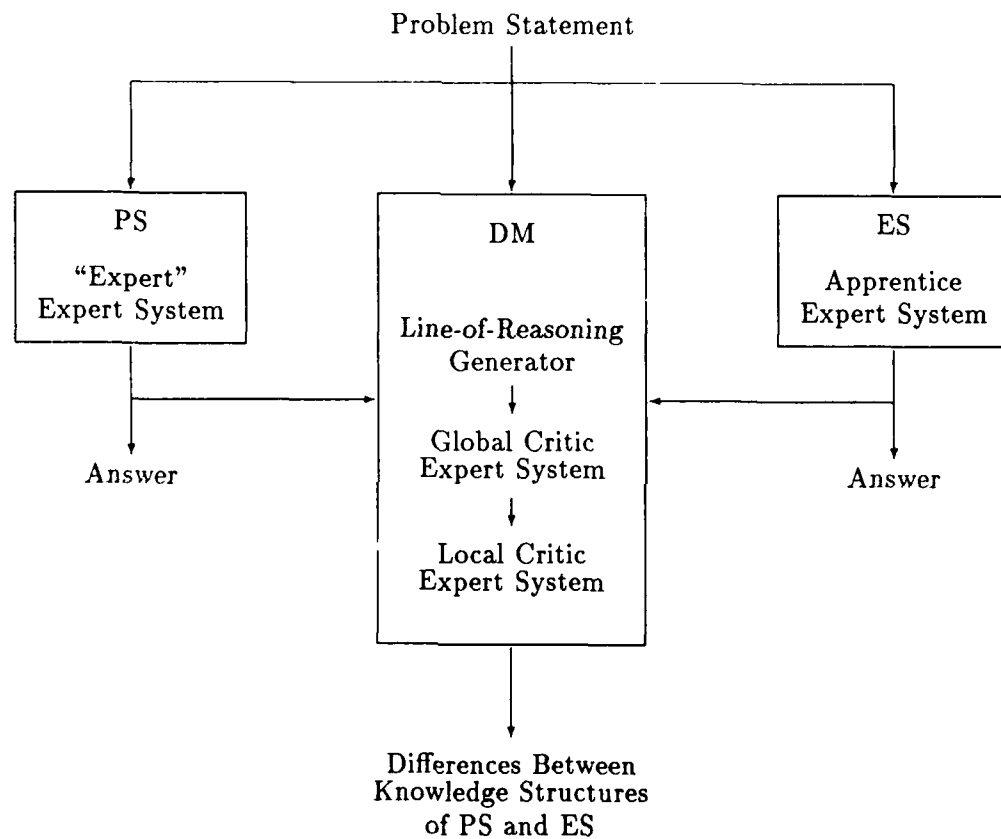


Figure 6: Synthetic agent validation situation for apprenticeship learning in which the role of the PS has been filled by a synthetic expert system. In apprenticeship learning, the DM watches PS to improve ES's knowledge structures.

In HERACLES, domain knowledge is encoded using a relational language and MYCIN-type rules (Clancey, 1986b). The knowledge relations of the relational language are predicate calculus representations of the domain knowledge, written using

the logic programming language MRS. For example, an instantiation of the proposition (SUGGESTS \$PARM \$HYP) represents the fact that if a particular parameter is true then this suggests that a particular hypothesis is true. An instantiation of the template (ASKFIRST \$FINDING \$FLAG-VALUE) specifies whether the system should first ask the user for the value of a finding, or derive the information from existing information. The major domain knowledge base for HERACLES at this time is the NEOMYCIN knowledge base for diagnosing meningitis and neurological problems (Clancey, 1984). A second effort in the sand casting domain is called CASTER (Thompson and Clancey, 1986).

Three aspects of the HERACLES expert system shell facilitate the task of differential modeling faced by ODYSSEUS. First, distinctions are made between the different types of knowledge in HERACLES' knowledge base, such as heuristic, definitional, causal, and control knowledge. Second, the method of reasoning, called hypothesis-directed reasoning, approximates that used by human experts (Clancey, 1984). Hence, HERACLES can be viewed as a simulation of an expert's process of diagnosis. Third, the control knowledge is explicitly represented as a procedural network of subroutines and metarules that are both free of domain knowledge; the subroutines and metarules use variables rather than specific domain terms (Clancey, 1986b). By contrast, the heuristic rules in MYCIN have a great deal of control knowledge imbedded in the premises of the rules (Clancey, 1983; Buchanan and Shortliffe, 1984).

Figure 5 shows the place of the ODYSSEUS DM in the context of debugging an apprentice expert system. The DM tracks the problem-solving actions of the PS step by step. For each observable step of the problem solver, ODYSSEUS generates and scores the alternative *lines of reasoning* that can explain the reasoning step. If the global critic does not find any plausible reasoning path, or all found paths have a low plausibility, ODYSSEUS assumes that there is a difference in knowledge between the human problem solver and the expert system. The local critic attempts to locate the knowledge difference either automatically or by asking the expert specific questions. ODYSSEUS' analysis of problem-solving steps uses two underlying domain theories: a strategy theory of the problem-solving method called hypothesis-directed reasoning using the heuristic classification method, and an inductive predictive theory for

heuristic rules that uses a library of previously solved problem cases.

The ODYSSEUS global and local critics are themselves being implemented as two HERACLES-based expert systems. There are three reasons why we choose to implement the critics as expert systems. First, the task that confronts the learning critics is a knowledge-intensive task (Dietterich and Buchanan, 1981), and expert system techniques are useful for representing large amounts of knowledge. Second, with an expert system architecture, the reasoning method used by the critics can be made explicit and easily evaluated, since the domain knowledge is declaratively encoded using HERACLES' knowledge relations and simple heuristic rules. Third, since ODYSSEUS is designed to improve any HERACLES-based expert system, it can theoretically improve itself in an apprenticeship learning setting.

Approximately sixty different knowledge relations in HERACLES specify the declarative domain knowledge. It would be useful to know how successful the global and local critics are at detecting discrepancies in the different knowledge relations of the knowledge representation language. Are there certain types of knowledge relations whose absence is always noticeable? Are there particular types of knowledge whose absence is very hard to recognize? For example, HERACLES represents final diagnoses in a hierarchical tree structure; determining that a problem is caused by a missing link in this structure may be very difficult for the apprentice to discover. By contrast, it may be very easy to discover whether a trigger property of a rule is missing. A trigger property causes the conclusion of a rule to be treated as an active hypothesis if particular clauses of the rule premise are satisfied. Clearly global and local credit assignment are greatly affected by the complexity of the procedural control knowledge used in the expert system shell.

6 Summary

With the proliferation of expert systems, methods of intelligent tutoring and apprenticeship learning that are based on differential modeling of the normal problem-solving behavior of a student or expert against a knowledge-intensive expert system

should become increasingly common. The synthetic agent method is proposed as an objective means of assessing the limits of a particular differential modeling program in the context of intelligent tutoring and apprenticeship learning. The power of a differential modeler is crucially dependent upon the expert system's method of knowledge representation and control. The synthetic agent method provides a means of expressing the limitations of a differential modeler in terms of the knowledge representation and control vocabulary.

The synthetic agent method involves a systematic perturbation of a program that takes the place of the student or expert. Traditionally, methods of evaluating a differential modeler have focused on a performance lower bound. The described synthetic agent method focuses on establishing a performance upper bound. It provides a means of exploring the extent that a differential modeling system is able to detect and isolate an arbitrary difference between a knowledge base of an expert system and the problem-solving knowledge of a student or expert. Our work to date confirms our belief that the task of differential modeling is easier the more an expert system represents factual domain knowledge in a declarative fashion.

The validation framework described in this paper is being used to assess the limits of the ODYSSEUS modeling program in the context of intelligent tutoring and apprenticeship learning. Students and experts are being differentially modeled against knowledge bases for the HERACLES' expert system shell. This should lead to a better understanding of the synthetic agent method, the ODYSSEUS modeling program, and the extent to which HERACLES' method of knowledge representation and control facilitates differential modeling.

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Personnel Analysis Division,
AF/MPXA
5C360, The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Air Force Human Resources Lab
AFHRL/MPD
Brooks AFB, TX 78235

AFOSR,
Life Sciences Directorate
Bolling Air Force Base
Washington, DC 20332

Dr. Robert Ahlers
Code N711
Human Factors Laboratory
Naval Training Systems Center
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Ed Aiken
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. William E. Alley
AFHRL/MOT
Brooks AFB, TX 78235

Dr. Earl A. Alluissi
HQ, AFHRL (AFSC)
Brooks AFB, TX 78235

Dr. John R. Anderson
Department of Psychology
Carnegie-Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Nancy S. Anderson
Department of Psychology
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

Dr. Steve Andriole
George Mason University
School of Information
Technology & Engineering
4400 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dr. John Annett
University of Warwick
Department of Psychology
Coventry CV4 7AJ
ENGLAND

Dr. Phipps Arabie
University of Illinois
Department of Psychology
603 E. Daniel St.
Champaign, IL 61820

Technical Director, ARI
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Special Assistant for Project
OASN(M&RA)
5D800, The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dr. Michael Atwood
ITT - Programming
1000 Oronoque Lane
Stratford, CT 06497

Dr. Patricia Baggett
University of Colorado
Department of Psychology
Box 345
Boulder, CO 80309

Dr. Eva L. Baker
UCLA Center for the Study
of Evaluation
145 Moore Hall
University of California
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Dr. James D. Baker
Director of Automation
Allen Corporation of America
401 Wythe Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dr. Meryl S. Baker
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Donald E. Bamber
Code 71
Navy Personnel R & D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Mr. J. Barber
HQS, Department of the Army
DAPE-ZBR
Washington, DC 20310

Capt. J. Jean Belanger
Training Development Division
Canadian Forces Training System
CFTSHQ, CFB Trenton
Astra, Ontario, KOK
CANADA

CDR Robert J. Biersner, USN
Naval Biodynamics Laboratory
P. O. Box 29407
New Orleans, LA 70189

Dr. Menucha Birenbaum
School of Education
Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv, Ramat Aviv 69978
ISRAEL

Dr. Werner P. Birke
Personalstammamt der Bundeswehr
Kolner Strasse 262
D-5000 Koeln 90
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Dr. Gautam Biswas
Department of Computer Science
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208

Dr. John Black
College, Columbia Univ.
525 West 121st Street
New York, NY 10027

Dr. Arthur S. Blaiwes
Code N711
Naval Training Systems Center
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Robert Blanchard
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Jeff Bonar
Learning R&D Center
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dr. J. C. Boudreaux
Center for Manufacturing
Engineering
National Bureau of Standards
Gaithersburg, MD 20899

Dr. Gordon H. Bower
Department of Psychology
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94306

Dr. Richard Braby
NTSC Code 10
Orlando, FL 32851

Dr. Robert Breaux
Code N-095R
Naval Training Systems Center
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. John S. Brown
XEROX Palo Alto Research
Center

3333 Coyote Road
Palo Alto, CA 94304

Dr. Bruce Buchanan
Computer Science Department
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Dr. Howard Burrows
National Institute of Health
Bldg. 10, Room 5C-106
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dr. Patricia A. Butler
OERI
555 New Jersey Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20208

Dr. Tom Cafferty
Dept. of Psychology
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208

Dr. Robert Calfee
School of Education
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Joanne Capper
Center for Research into Practice
1718 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

Dr. Jaime Carbonell
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of Psychology
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Mr. James W. Carey
Commandant (G-PTE)
U.S. Coast Guard
2100 Second Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20593

Dr. Susan Carey
Harvard Graduate School of
Education
337 Gutman Library
Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dr. Pat Carpenter
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of Psychology
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Prof. John W. Carr III
Department of Computer Science
Moore School of
Electrical Engineering
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dr. Robert Carroll
OP 01B7
Washington, DC 20370

LCDR Robert Carter
Office of the Chief
of Naval Operations
OP-01B
Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-2000

Dr. Fred Chang
Navy Personnel R&D Center
Code 51
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Alphonse Chapanis
8415 Bellona Lane
Suite 210
Buxton Towers
Baltimore, MD 21204

Dr. Davida Charney
Department of Psychology
Carnegie-Mellon University
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Eugene Charniak
Brown University
Computer Science Department
Providence, RI 02912

Dr. Paul R. Chatelier
OUSDRE
Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-2000

Dr. Michelene Chi
Learning R & D Center
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Mr. Raymond E. Christal
AFHRL/MOE
Brooks AFB, TX 78235

Dr. Yee-Yeen Chu
Perceptronics, Inc.
21111 Erwin Street
Woodland Hills, CA 91367-371

Dr. William Clancey
Stanford University
Knowledge Systems Laboratory
701 Welch Road, Bldg. C
Palo Alto, CA 94304

Chief of Naval Education
and Training
Liaison Office
Air Force Human Resource Lab
Operations Training Division
Williams AFB, AZ 85224

Assistant Chief of Staff
for Research, Development,
Test, and Evaluation
Naval Education and
Training Command (N-5)
NAS Pensacola, FL 32508

Dr. Allan M. Collins
Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc.
50 Moulton Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dr. John J. Collins
Director, Field Research
Office, Orlando
NPRDC Liaison Officer
NTSC Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Stanley Collier
Office of Naval Technology
Code 222
800 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Dr. Lynn A. Cooper
Learning R&D Center
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Meredith P. Crawford
American Psychological Association
Office of Educational Affairs
1200 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

Dr. Hans Crombag
University of Leyden
Education Research Center
Boerhaavelaan 2
2334 EN Leyden
The NETHERLANDS

LT Judy Crookshanks
Chief of Naval Operations
OP-112G5
Washington, DC 20370-2000

Dr. Kenneth B. Cross
Anacapa Sciences, Inc.
P.O. Drawer Q
Santa Barbara, CA 93102

Dr. Mary Cross
Department of Education
Adult Literacy Initiative
Poom 4145
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

CTB/McGraw-Hill Library
2500 Garden Road
Monterey, CA 93940

CAPT P. Michael Curran
Office of Naval Research
800 N. Quincy St.
Code 125
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Dr. Cary Czichon
Intelligent Instructional Sy
Texas Instruments AI Lab
P.O. Box 660245
Dallas, TX 75266

Bryan Dallman
AFHRL/LRT
Lowry AFB, CO 80230

LT John Deaton
ONR Code 125
800 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Dr. Natalie Dehn
Department of Computer and
Information Science
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

Dr. Gerald F. DeJong
Artificial Intelligence Grou
Coordinated Science Laborato
University of Illinois
Urbana, IL 61801

Goery Delacote
Directeur de L'informatique
Scientifique et Technique
CNRS
15, Quai Anatole France
75700 Paris FRANCE

Mr. Robert Denton
AFMPC/MPCYPR
Randolph AFB, TX 78150

Mr. Paul DiRenzo
Commandant of the Marine Corps
Code LBC-4
Washington, DC 20380

Dr. R. K. Dismukes
Associate Director for Life Sciences
AFOSR
Bolling AFB
Washington, DC 20332

Defense Technical
Information Center
Cameron Station, Bldg 5
Alexandria, VA 22314
Attn: TC
(12 Copies)

Dr. Thomas M. Duffy
Communications Design Center
Carnegie-Mellon University
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Barbara Eason
Military Educator's
Resource Network
InterAmerica Research Associates
1555 Wilson Blvd
Arlington, VA 22209

Edward E. Eddowes
CNATRA N301
Naval Air Station
Corpus Christi, TX 78419

Dr. John Ellis
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92252

Dr. Richard Elster
Deputy Assistant Secretary
of the Navy (Manpower)
OASN (M&RA)
Department of the Navy
Washington, DC 20350-1000

Dr. Susan Embretson
University of Kansas
Psychology Department
426 Fraser
Lawrence, KS 66045

Dr. Randy Engle
Department of Psychology
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208

Lt. Col Rich Entlich
HQ, Department of the Army
OCSA(DACS-DPM)
Washington, DC 20310

Dr. Susan Epstein
Hunter College
144 S. Mountain Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042

Dr. William Epstein
University of Wisconsin
W. J. Brogden Psychology Bld
1202 W. Johnson Street
Madison, WI 53706

ERIC Facility-Acquisitions
4833 Rugby Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20014

Dr. K. Anders Ericsson
University of Colorado
Department of Psychology
Boulder, CO 80309

Dr. Edward Esty
Department of Education, OEP
Room 717D
1200 19th St., NW
Washington, DC 20208

Dr. Beatrice J. Farr
Army Research Institute
5901 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. Marshall J. Farr
3520 North Vernon Street
Arlington, VA 22207

Dr. Pat Federico
Code 511
NPRDC
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Jerome A. Feldman
University of Rochester
Computer Science Department
Rochester, NY 14627

Dr. Paul Feltovich
Southern Illinois University
School of Medicine
Medical Education Department
P.O. Box 3926
Springfield, IL 62708

Mr. Wallace Feurzeig
Educational Technology
Bolt Beranek & Newman
10 Moulton St.
Cambridge, MA 02238

Dr. Craig I. Fields
ARPA
1400 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209

Dr. Gerhard Fischer
University of Colorado
Department of Computer Science
Boulder, CO 80309

J. D. Fletcher
9931 Corliss Street
Vienna, VA 22180

Dr. Linda Flower
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of English
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Kenneth D. Forbus
University of Illinois
Department of Computer Science
1304 West Springfield Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801

Dr. Barbara A. Fox
University of Colorado
Department of Linguistics
Boulder, CO 80309

Dr. Carl H. Frederiksen
McGill University
3700 McTavish Street
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1Y2
CANADA

Dr. John R. Frederiksen
Bolt Beranek & Newman
50 Moulton Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dr. Norman Frederiksen
Educational Testing Service
Princeton, NJ 08541

Dr. Alfred R. Fregly
AFOSR/NL
Bolling AFB, DC 20332

Dr. Bob Frey
Commandant (G-P-1/2)
USCG HQ
Washington, DC 20593

Dr. Alinda Friedman
Department of Psychology
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
CANADA T6G 2E9

Julie A. Gadsden
Information Technology
Applications Division
Admiralty Research Establish
Portsmouth, Portsmouth PO6 4A
UNITED KINGDOM

Dr. R. Edward Geiselman
Department of Psychology
University of California
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Dr. Michael Genesereth
Stanford University
Computer Science Department
Stanford, CA 94305

Dr. Dedre Gentner
University of Illinois
Department of Psychology
603 E. Daniel St.
Champaign, IL 61820

Dr. Robert Glaser
Learning Research
& Development Center
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dr. Arthur M. Glenberg
University of Wisconsin
W. J. Brogden Psychology Bldg.
1202 W. Johnson Street
Madison, WI 53706

Dr. Marvin D. Glock
13 Stone Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853

Dr. Gene L. Gloye
Office of Naval Research
Detachment
1030 E. Green Street
Pasadena, CA 91106-2485

Dr. Sam Glucksberg
Department of Psychology
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08540

Dr. Joseph Goguen
Computer Science Laboratory
SRI International
333 Ravenswood Avenue
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dr. Sherrie Gott
AFHRL/MODJ
Brooks AFB, TX 78235

Jordan Grafman, Ph.D.
2021 Lyttonsville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dr. Richard H. Granger
Department of Computer Science
University of California, Irvine
Irvine, CA 92717

Dr. Wayne Gray
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. James G. Greeno
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

H. William Greenup
Education Advisor (E031)
Education Center, MCDEC
Quantico, VA 22134

Dipl. Pad. Michael W. Habon
Universitat Dusseldorf
Erziehungswissenschaftliches
Universitätsstr. 1
D-4000 Dusseldorf 1
WEST GERMANY

Prof. Edward Haertel
School of Education
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Dr. Henry M. Halff
Halff Resources, Inc.
4918 33rd Road, North
Arlington, VA 22207

Dr. Ronald K. Hambleton
Prof. of Education & Psychol
University of Massachusetts
at Amherst
Hills House
Amherst, MA 01003

Dr. Cheryl Hamel
NTSC
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Bruce W. Hamill
Johns Hopkins University
Applied Physics Laboratory
Johns Hopkins Road
Laurel, MD 20707

Dr. Ray Hannapel
Scientific and Engineering
Personnel and Education
National Science Foundation
Washington, DC 20550

Stevan Harnad
Editor, The Behavioral and
Brain Sciences
20 Nassau Street, Suite 240
Princeton, NJ 08540

Mr. William Hartung
PEAM Product Manager
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. Wayne Harvey
SRI International
333 Ravenswood Ave.
Room B-S324
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dr. Reid Hastie
Northwestern University
Department of Psychology
Evanston, IL 60201

Prof. John R. Hayes
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of Psychology
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Barbara Hayes-Roth
Department of Computer Science
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 95305

Dr. Frederick Hayes-Roth
Teknowledge
525 University Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Dr. Joan I. Heller
505 Haddon Road
Oakland, CA 94606

Dr. James Hendler
Dept. of Computer Science
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

Dr. Jim Hollan
Intelligent Systems Group
Institute for
Cognitive Science (C-015)
UCSD
La Jolla, CA 92093

Dr. Melissa Holland
Army Research Institute for
Behavioral and Social Sci
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. Robert W. Holt
Department of Psychology
George Mason University
4400 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dr. Keith Holyoak
University of Michigan
Human Performance Center
330 Packard Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Prof. Lutz F. Hornke
Institut für Psychologie
RWTH Aachen
Jaegerstrasse 17/19
D-5100 Aachen
WEST GERMANY

Mr. Dick Hoshaw
GP-135
Arlington Annex
Room 2834
Washington, DC 20350

Dr. James Howard
Dept. of Psychology
Human Performance Laboratory
Catholic University of
America
Washington, DC 20064

Dr. Steven Hunka
Department of Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
CANADA

Dr. Earl Hunt
Department of Psychology
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98105

Dr. Ed Hutchins
Intelligent Systems Group
Institute for
Cognitive Science (C-015)
UCSD
La Jolla, CA 92093

Dr. Dillon Inouye
WICAT Education Institute
Provo, UT 84057

Dr. Alice Isen
Department of Psychology
University of Maryland
Catonsville, MD 21228

Dr. Zachary Jacobson
Bureau of Management Consulting
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
CANADA

Dr. Robert Jannarone
Department of Psychology
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208

Dr. Claude Janvier
Directeur, CIRADE
Universite' du Quebec a Montreal
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3P8
CANADA

COL Dennis W. Jarvi
Commander
AFHRL
Brooks AFB, TX 78235-5601

Dr. Robin Jeffries
Hewlett-Packard Laboratories
P.O. Box 10490
Palo Alto, CA 94303-0971

Dr. Robert Jernigan
Decision Resource Systems
5595 Vantage Point Road
Columbia, MD 21044

Margaret Jerome
c/o Dr. Peter Chandler
83, The Drive
Hove
Sussex
UNITED KINGDOM

Dr. Joseph E. Johnson
Assistant Dean for
Graduate Studies
College of Science and Mathe
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208

Dr. Richard Johnson
Boise State University
Simplot/Micron
Technology Center
Boise, ID 83725

CDR Tom Jones
ONR Code 125
800 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Dr. Douglas A. Jones
P.O. Box 6640
Lawrenceville
NJ 08648

Col. Dominique Jouslin de No
Etat-Major de l'Armee de Ter
Centre de Relations Humaines
3 Avenue Octave Greard
75007 Paris
FRANCE

Dr. Marcel Just
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of Psychology
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Milton S. Katz
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. Scott Kelso
Haskins Laboratories,
270 Crown Street
New Haven, CT 06510

Dr. Dennis Kibler
University of California
Department of Information
and Computer Science
Irvine, CA 92717

Dr. David Kieras
University of Michigan
Technical Communication
College of Engineering
1223 E. Engineering Building
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Dr. Peter Kincaid
Training Analysis
& Evaluation Group
Department of the Navy
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Walter Kintsch
Department of Psychology
University of Colorado
Campus Box 345
Boulder, CO 80302

Dr. Paula Kirk
Oakridge Associated Universities
University Programs Division
P.O. Box 117
Oakridge, TN 37831-0117

Dr. David Klahr
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of Psychology
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Mazie Knerr
Program Manager
Training Research Division
HumRRO
1100 S. Washington
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dr. Janet L. Kolodner
Georgia Institute of Technology
School of Information
& Computer Science
Atlanta, GA 30332

Dr. Stephen Kosslyn
Harvard University
1236 William James Hall
33 Kirkland St.
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dr. Kenneth Kotovsky
Department of Psychology
Community College of
Allegheny County
900 Allegheny Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

Dr. David H. Krantz
2 Washington Square Village
Apt. # 15J
New York, NY 10012

Dr. Benjamin Kuipers
University of Texas at Austin
Department of Computer Science
T.S. Painter Hall 3.28
Austin, Texas 78712

Dr. David R. Lambert
Naval Ocean Systems Center
Code 441T
271 Catalina Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Pat Langley
University of California
Department of Information
and Computer Science
Irvine, CA 92717

M. Diane Langston
Communications Design Center
Carnegie-Mellon University
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Jill Larkin
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of Psychology
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Robert Lawler
Information Sciences, FRL
GTE Laboratories, Inc.
40 Sylvan Road
Waltham, MA 02254

Dr. Paul E. Lehner
PAR Technology Corp.
7926 Jones Branch Drive
Suite 170
McLean, VA 22102

Dr. Alan M. Lesgold
Learning R&D Center
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dr. Alan Leshner
Deputy Division Director
Behavioral and Neural Sciences
National Science Foundation
1800 G Street
Washington, DC 20550

Dr. Jim Levin
University of California
Laboratory for Comparative
Human Cognition
D003A
La Jolla, CA 92093

Dr. John Levine
Learning R&D Center
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dr. Michael Levine
Educational Psychology
210 Education Bldg.
University of Illinois
Champaign, IL 61801

Dr. Charles Lewis
Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
Oude Boteringestraat 23
9712GC Groningen
The NETHERLANDS

Dr. Clayton Lewis
University of Colorado
Department of Computer Science
Campus Box 430
Boulder, CO 80309

Library
Naval War College
Newport, RI 02940

Library
Naval Training Systems Center
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Charlotte Linde
SRI International
333 Ravenswood Avenue
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dr. Marcia C. Linn
Lawrence Hall of Science
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Dr. Robert Linn
College of Education
University of Illinois
Urbana, IL 61801

Dr. Don Lyon
P. O. Box 44
Higley, AZ 85236

Dr. Jane Malin
Mail Code SR 111
NASA Johnson Space Center
Houston, TX 77058

Dr. William L. Maloy
Chief of Naval Education
and Training
Naval Air Station
Pensacola, FL 32508

Dr. Sandra P. Marshall
Dept. of Psychology
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA 92182

Dr. Manton M. Matthews
Department of Computer Science
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208

Dr. Richard E. Mayer
Department of Psychology
University of California
Santa Barbara, CA 93106

Dr. James McBride
Psychological Corporation
c/o Harcourt, Brace,
Javanovich Inc.
1250 West 6th Street
San Diego, CA 92101

Dr. David J. McGuinness
Gallaudet College
800 Florida Avenue, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002

Dr. Kathleen McKeown
Columbia University
Department of Computer Science
New York, NY 10027

Dr. Joe McLachlan
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. James McMichael
Assistant for MPT Research,
Development, and Studies
OP 01B7
Washington, DC 20370

Dr. Barbara Means
Human Resources
Research Organization
1100 South Washington
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dr. Douglas L. Medin
Department of Psychology
University of Illinois
603 E. Daniel Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Dr. Arthur Melmed
U. S. Department of Education
724 Brown
Washington, DC 20208

Dr. Jose Mestre
Department of Physics
Hasbrouck Laboratory
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

Dr. Al Meyrowitz
Office of Naval Research
Code 1133
800 N. Quincy
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Dr. Ryszard S. Michalski
University of Illinois
Department of Computer Science
1304 West Springfield Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801

Prof. D. Michie
The Turing Institute
36 North Hanover Street
Glasgow G1 2AD, Scotland
UNITED KINGDOM

Dr. George A. Miller
Department of Psychology
Green Hall
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08540

Dr. James R. Miller
MCC
9430 Research Blvd.
Echelon Building #1, Suite 2
Austin, TX 78759

Dr. Mark Miller
Computer Thought Corporation
1721 West Plano Parkway
Plano, TX 75075

Dr. Andrew R. Molnar
Scientific and Engineering
Personnel and Education
National Science Foundation
Washington, DC 20550

Dr. William Montague
NPRDC Code 13
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Tom Moran
Xerox PARC
3333 Coyote Hill Road
Palo Alto, CA 94304

Dr. Melvyn Moy
Navy Personnel R & D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Allen Munro
Behavioral Technology
Laboratories - USC
1845 S. Elena Ave., 4th Floor
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

Director,
Decision Support
Systems Division, NMPC
Naval Military Personnel Command
N-164
Washington, DC 20370

Director,
Distribution Department, NMPC
N-4
Washington, DC 20370

Director,
Overseas Duty Support
Program, NMPC
N-62
Washington, DC 20370

Head, HRM Operations Branch,
NMPC
N-621
Washington, DC 20370

Assistant for Evaluation,
Analysis, and MIS, NMPC
N-60
Washington, DC 20370

Spec. Asst. for Research, Experi-
mental & Academic Programs,
NTTC (Code 016)
NAS Memphis (75)
Millington, TN 38054

Director,
Research & Analysis Div.,
NAVCRTICOM Code 22
4015 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22203

Technical Director
Navy Health Research Center
P.O. Box 85122
San Diego, CA 92138

Leadership Management Educat
and Training Project Offi
Naval Medical Command
Code 05C
Washington, DC 20372

Technical Director,
Navy Health Research Ctr.
P.O. Box 85122
San Diego, CA 92138

Dr. T. Niblett
The Turing Institute
36 North Hanover Street
Glasgow G1 2AD, Scotland
UNITED KINGDOM

Dr. Richard E. Nisbett
University of Michigan
Institute for Social Research
Room 5261
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Dr. Mary Jo Nissen
University of Minnesota
N218 Elliott Hall
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dr. Donald A. Norman
Institute for Cognitive Scie
University of California
La Jolla, CA 92093

Director, Training Laborator
NPRDC (Code 05)
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Director, Manpower and Perso
Laboratory,
NPRDC (Code 06)
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Director, Human Factors
& Organizational Systems
NPRDC (Code 07)
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Fleet Support Office,
NPRDC (Code 301)
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Library, NPRDC
Code P201L
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Commanding Officer,
Naval Research Laboratory
Code 2627
Washington, DC 20390

Dr. Harold E. O'Neill, Jr.
School of Education - WPH 801
Department of Educational
Psychology & Technology
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0031

Dr. Stellan Ohlsson
Learning R & D Center
University of Pittsburgh
3339 O'Hara Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Director, Research Programs,
Office of Naval Research
800 North Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Office of Naval Research,
Code 1133
800 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Office of Naval Research,
Code 1142
800 N. Quincy St
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Office of Naval Research,
Code 1142EP
800 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Office of Naval Research,
Code 1142PT
800 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22217-5000
(6 Copies)

Director, Technology Programs,
Office of Naval Research
Code 12
800 North Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Special Assistant for Marine
Corps Matters,
ONR Code 00MC
800 N. Quincy St.
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Assistant for Long Range
Requirements,
CNO Executive Panel
OP 00K
2000 North Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311

Assistant for MPT Research,
Development and Studies
OP 01B7
Washington, DC 20370

Dr. Judith Orasanu
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. Jesse Orlansky
Institute for Defense Analys
1801 N. Beauregard St.
Alexandria, VA 22311

Prof. Seymour Papert
20C-109
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology
Cambridge, MA 02139

CDR R. T. Parlette
Chief of Naval Operations
OP-112G
Washington, DC 20370-2000

Dr. James Paulson
Department of Psychology
Portland State University
P.O. Box 751
Portland, OR 97207

Dr. Douglas Pearse
DCIEM
Box 2000
Downsview, Ontario
CANADA

Dr. Virginia E. Pendergrass
Code 711
Naval Training Systems Center
Orlando, FL 32813-7100

Dr. Robert Penn
NPRDC
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Nancy Pennington
University of Chicago
Graduate School of Business
1101 E. 58th St.
Chicago, IL 60637

Military Assistant for Training and
Personnel Technology,
OUSD (R & E)
Room 3D129, The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-3080

Dr. Ray Perez
ARI (PERI-II)
3001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. David N. Perkins
Educational Technology Center
300 Putnam Library
Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138

CDR Frank C. Petho, MSC, USN
NAIPA Code 836, Bldg. 1
NAS
Corpus Christi, TX 78419

Administrative Sciences Department,
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93940

Department of Computer Science,
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93940

Department of Operations Research,
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93940

Dr. David Plump
Drexel University of Technol
Department of Education
Box 11
ABENSBREE

THE NETHERLANDS

Dr. Muth Polman
Department of Psychology
P.O. Box 116
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO 80501

Dr. Peter Polman
University of Colorado
Department of Psychology
Boulder, CO 80501

Dr. Steven E. Poltrook
MCI
440 Research Blvd.
Bekelton Bldg #1
Austin, TX 78761-6809

Dr. Harry E. Poppe
University of Pittsburgh
Decision Systems Laboratory
1360 Scarfe Hall
Pittsburgh, PA 15261

Dr. Mary C. Potter
Department of Psychology
MIT (E-10-032)
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dr. Joseph Psotka
ATTN: PERI-1C
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. Roy Rada
National Library of Medicine
Bethesda, MD 20894

Dr. Lynne Reder
Department of Psychology
Carnegie-Mellon University
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Brian Reiser
Department of Psychology
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544

Dr. James A. Reggia
University of Maryland
School of Medicine
Department of Neurology
22 South Greene Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

CDR Karen Reider
Naval School of Health Sciences
National Naval Medical Center
Bldg. 141
Washington, DC 20814

Dr. Fred Reif
Physics Department
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Dr. Lauren Resnick
Learning R & D Center
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Mary S. Riley
Program in Cognitive Science
Center for Human Information
Processing
University of California
La Jolla, CA 92093

William Rizzo
Code 712
Naval Training Systems Center
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Linda G. Roberts
Science, Education, and
Transportation Program
Office of Technology Assessment
Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

Dr. Andrew M. Rose
American Institutes
for Research
1055 Thomas Jefferson St., NW
Washington, DC 20007

Dr. William B. Rouse
Search Technology, Inc.
25-b Technology Park/Atlanta
Norcross, GA 30092

Dr. Donald Rubin
Statistics Department
Science Center, Room 608
1 Oxford Street
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dr. David Rumelhart
Center for Human
Information Processing
Univ. of California
La Jolla, CA 92093

Ms. Riitta Ruotsalainen
General Headquarters
Training Section
Military Psychology Office
PL 919
SF-00101 Helsinki 10, FINLAND

Dr. Michael J. Samet
Perceptronics, Inc
6271 Variel Avenue
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

Dr. Roger Schank
Yale University
Computer Science Department
P.O. Box 2158
New Haven, CT 06520

Dr. W. L. Scherlis
Dept. of Computer Science
Carnegie-Mellon University
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Mrs. Birgitte Schneidelbach
Forsvarets Center for Leder
Christianshavns Voldgade 8
1424 Kobenhavn K
DENMARK

Dr. Walter Schneider
Learning R&D Center
University of Pittsburgh
3939 O'Hara Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dr. Alan H. Schoenfeld
University of California
Department of Education
Berkeley, CA 94720

Dr. Janet Schofield
Learning R&D Center
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dr. Marc Sebrechts
Department of Psychology
Wesleyan University
Middletown, CT 06475

Dr. Judith Segal
OERI
555 New Jersey Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20208

Dr. Robert J. Seidel
US Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. Ramsay W. Selden
Assessment Center
CCSSO
Suite 379
400 N. Capitol, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dr. W. Steve Sellman
OASD(MRA&L)
2B269 The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dr. Sylvia A. S. Shafto
OERI
555 New Jersey Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20208

Dr. T. B. Sheridan
Dept. of Mechanical Engineering
MIT
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dr. Ben Shneiderman
Dept. of Computer Science
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

Dr. Ted Shortliffe
Computer Science Department
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Dr. Lee Sussman
Stanford University
1140 Lathcart Way
Stanford, CA 94305

Dr. Randall Shumaker
Naval Research Laboratory
Code 7510
4555 Overlook Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20375-5000

Dr. Robert S. Siegler
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of Psychology
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Herbert A. Simon
Department of Psychology
Carnegie-Mellon University
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

LTCOL Robert Simpson
Defense Advanced Research
Projects Administration
1400 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209

Dr. Rita M. Simutis
Instructional Technology
Systems Area
ARI
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. H. Wallace Sinaiko
Manpower Research
and Advisory Services
Smithsonian Institution
801 North Pitt Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dr. Derek Sleeman
Stanford University
School of Education
Stanford, CA 94305

Dr. Charles F. Smith
North Carolina State University
Department of Statistics
Raleigh, NC 27695-8703

Dr. Edward E. Smith
Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc.
50 Moulton Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dr. Linda B. Smith
Department of Psychology
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405

Dr. Alfred F. Smode
Senior Scientist
Code 07A
Naval Training Systems Center
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Richard E. Snow
Department of Psychology
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94306

Dr. Elliot Soloway
Yale University
Computer Science Department
P.O. Box 2158
New Haven, CT 06520

Dr. Richard Sorensen
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Kathryn T. Spoehr
Brown University
Department of Psychology
Providence, RI 02912

James J. Staszewski
Research Associate
Carnegie-Mellon University
Department of Psychology
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Marian Stearns
SRI International
333 Ravenswood Ave.
Room B-S324
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dr. Robert Sternberg
Department of Psychology
Yale University
Box 11A, Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520

Dr. Albert Stevens
Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc.
10 Moulton St.
Cambridge, MA 02238

Dr. Paul J. Sticha
Senior Staff Scientist
Training Research Division
HumRRO
1100 S. Washington
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dr. Thomas Sticht
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. David Stone
KAJ Software, Inc.
3420 East Shea Blvd.
Suite 161
Phoenix, AZ 85028

Cdr Michael Suman, PD 303
Naval Training Systems Center
Code N51, Comptroller
Orlando, FL 32813

Dr. Hariharan Swaminathan
Laboratory of Psychometric and
Evaluation Research
School of Education
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

Mr. Brad Sympson
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. John Tangney
AFOSR/NL
Bolling AFB, DC 20332

Dr. Kikumi Tatsuoka
CERL
252 Engineering Research
Laboratory
Urbana, IL 61801

Dr. Martin M. Taylor
DCIEM
Box 2000
Downsview, Ontario
CANADA

Dr. Perry W. Thorndyke
FMC Corporation
Central Engineering Labs
1185 Coleman Avenue, Box 580
Santa Clara, CA 95052

Major Jack Thorpe
DARPA
1400 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209

Dr. Douglas Towne
Behavioral Technology Labs
1845 S. Elena Ave.
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

Dr. Amos Tversky
Stanford University
Dept. of Psychology
Stanford, CA 94305

Dr. James Tweeddale
Technical Director
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Paul Twohig
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps
Code MPI-20
Washington, DC 20380

Dr. Kurt Van Lehn
Department of Psychology
Carnegie-Mellon University
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. Beth Warren
Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc.
50 Moulton Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dr. David J. Weiss
N660 Elliott Hall
University of Minnesota
75 E. River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Roger Weissinger-Baylon
Department of Administrative
Sciences
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93940

Dr. Donald Weitzman
MITRE
1820 Dolley Madison Blvd.
MacLean, VA 22102

Dr. Keith T. Wescourt
FMC Corporation
Central Engineering Labs
1185 Coleman Ave., Box 580
Santa Clara, CA 95052

Dr. Douglas Wetzel
Code 12
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Barbara White
Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc.
17 Moulton Street
Cambridge, MA 02238

LCDR Cory deGroot Whitehead
Chief of Naval Operations
OP-112G1
Washington, DC 20370-2000

Dr. Michael Williams
IntelliCorp
1975 El Camino Real West
Mountain View, CA 94040-2216

Dr. Hilda Wing
Army Research Institute
5001 Eisenhower Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22333

A. E. Winterbauer
Research Associate
Electronics Division
Denver Research Institute
University Park
Denver, CO 80208-0454

Dr. Robert A. Wisher
U.S. Army Institute for the
Behavioral and Social Sciences
5001 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22333

Dr. Martin F. Wiskoff
Navy Personnel R & D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Merlin C. Wittrock
Graduate School of Education
UCLA
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Mr. John H. Wolfe
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Wallace Wulfeck, III
Navy Personnel R&D Center
San Diego, CA 92152-6800

Dr. Joe Yasatuke
AFHRL/LRT
Lowry AFB, CO 80230

Dr. Masoud Yazdani
Dept. of Computer Science
University of Exeter
Exeter EX4 4QL
Devon, ENGLAND

Major Frank Yohannan, USMC
Headquarters, Marine Corps
(Code MPI-20)
Washington, DC 20380

Mr. Carl York
System Development Foundation
181 Lytton Avenue
Suite 210
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Dr. Joseph L. Young
Memory & Cognitive
Processes
National Science Foundation
Washington, DC 20550

Dr. Steven Zornetzer
Office of Naval Research
Code 1140
800 N. Quincy St.
Arlington, VA 22217-5000

Dr. Michael J. Zyda
Naval Postgraduate School
Code 52CK
Monterey, CA 93943-5100

END

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DTic